

# REPUBLICANS SHOULD ABANDON PRIVATE HEALTH AND PRESCRIPTION DRUG INSURANCE SCHEME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I have an idea. What if we, say, break Medicare apart and ask seniors to shop in the private insurance market if they want to piece it back together. Seniors could buy one private plan to cover doctors visits, another to cover hospital stays, a third to cover home health services, and maybe a fourth to cover prescription drugs. Perhaps they could purchase an Aetna plan for outpatient care, a Kaiser plan for the physical therapy coverage, and maybe Golden Rule will offer insurance for medical equipment.

Does this sound absurd? Why is it less absurd to isolate prescription drugs and require Medicare beneficiaries to carry a separate private stand-alone you-are-on-your-own policy for that benefit?

That is what the Republican prescription drug plan is all about. It privatizes the prescription drug plan. It says to senior citizens, "Here is a voucher. Here is a little bit of money," although they give the money to the insurance company, actually not directly to the senior citizen. "Here is a plan, here is some money. Go out and find your own plan."

If the GOP prescription drug plan is a back door attempt to privatize Medicare, something that Republicans have wanted to do since 90 percent of them voted against the creation of Medicare 35 years ago, and occasionally say, in more recent years, that they want to privatize Medicare, my colleagues should come out and tell us that they want to privatize Medicare.

If their goal truly is to help America's elderly, my Republican colleagues need to go back to the drawing board. Better yet, follow our lead. The best way to complete the Medicare benefits package is to complete the Medicare benefits package. That means adding a new drug benefit to the existing Medicare program.

Medicare has worked for senior citizens in this country, half of whom had no health insurance 35 years ago. Medicare has worked for senior citizens in this country, making it probably the most popular government program in the history of this Nation. Why should we privatize it? Why should we take prescription drugs and make it into a private insurance stand-alone you-are-on-your-own kind of program?

It means we should add the new drug benefit to the existing Medicare benefits package. That is what works. We know that works. That is what this Congress should pass. Unless my colleagues can explain why the existing

Medicare program somehow is not worthy of a prescription drug benefit, they should abandon their private insurance scheme and join us.

Last Friday, a week ago today, I chartered a bus and took about 20 senior citizens from Lorain County and Medina County, Ohio, on a 2½ bus trip to Windsor, Ontario, Canada. They took their prescriptions with them for medicine. Most of them were Medicare beneficiaries, some were younger than that.

They took their prescriptions with them. We got a doctor in Canada to write a similar prescription. We went to a drugstore in Windsor, Ontario, and every senior citizen on that trip, every single senior citizen on that trip, saved at least \$100 on prescriptions. On the average, the 15 or 20 senior citizens saved \$200, and some of them saved as much as \$300 to \$400 on one prescription, on the one prescription that they had brought with them.

The fact is, Canadians buy the same drugs, their drug stores sell the same dosage of the same prescription drugs made by the same company, usually an American company, for half the price that American drugstores charge. It is not the drugstores, it is the fact that prescription drug companies, the big name brand drug companies in the United States of America, sell their drugs in Canada at half the price as they do in the United States.

We are the only country in the world, underscore that, we are the only country in the world, that allows the drug companies to unilaterally, monopolistically, discriminately sell their drugs to the United States with no interference.

In every other country in the world the prices are lower. In every other country in the world, from Germany to France to Israel to Nigeria to Brazil to Japan to England, none of those countries allows the drug companies to set their price in a monopolistic and discriminatory way. America's elderly pay twice as much for drugs as America's HMOs, big insurance companies, and the VA sell them for.

Americans buying drugs pay twice as much on the average as people in every other country in the world. Americans, in fact, pay more for their drugs out of pocket at a drugstore for the same drug than if they go into a pet store and buy the exact same drug and the exact same dosage for their pets.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this Congress put aside the risky insurance scheme and pass a Medicare drug benefit.

## THE CLINTON-GORE SECURITY GAP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, the American people are viewing the Los

Alamos tragedy, this latest tragedy of the losing of two hard drives in one of our most secure places in that nuclear weapons development institute, and having those hard drives lost for a long period of time, and it is still unclear exactly how long they have been lost, having them suddenly reappear behind a copy machine in a place that had been previously searched, and America debates what we should do with respect to this crisis; who should be fired, what reorganization should be made.

I think what we need to do now is to focus not just on this particular incident, but on four major occurrences that have taken place in the last 8 years that constitute in my estimation what I call the Clinton-Gore security gap.

Let me talk about the first of those things.

First, Dr. Wen Ho Lee was focused on in August of 1997 after we discovered that plans for the W-88 nuclear warhead had been stolen, and it appeared to be in the possession of the Communist Chinese. Dr. Wen Ho Lee, we focused on him and determined that he was a suspect in the theft of nuclear secrets. This was a very serious thing.

At that time, in August of 1997, the head of the FBI, Louis Freeh, met with the Clinton-Gore Department of Energy head, the Secretary of Energy, then Mr. Pena, and the head of the FBI said, essentially, "This guy appears to be a spy of nuclear secrets. Right now he is sitting there with total access to America's most critical nuclear secrets. Get him out of there. Get him out of there." He said that in August of 1997.

□ 1500

A few weeks earlier, he had met with Mr. Pena, Under Secretary of Energy, Elizabeth Moler, and according to Mr. Trulock, who was the head of security, told her the same thing, get this guy out of there, he may be a spy and may be accessing this very critical material. Seventeen months later, somebody looked around at Los Alamos, after the Cox Commission had started to investigate and said, hey, the suspected nuclear spy, is he still in the nuclear weapons vault with access to our most important secrets; and somebody else slapped their forehead and said, yes, I guess he is still there.

In the series of hearings that we had on this incident, there was lots of finger pointing. Elizabeth Moler said Mr. Trulock was supposed to fire him. Mr. Trulock said that she was very definitely told to get this guy out of there and that he told her how to go about doing it. And yet the Clinton-Gore administration allowed a suspected nuclear secrets spy to stay in place for 17 months after the head of the FBI personally met with the Secretary of Energy and said these are the circumstances, get him out of there.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we saw one of America's corporations, Loral Corporation, transfer missile technology to China in 1996. They allowed their scientists to engage with the Communist Chinese scientists and tell them what was wrong with their missiles, the Long March missile, because a lot of them were failing. Now, that is important, because that same Long March missile, besides carrying satellites, also carries nuclear warheads, some of which are aimed at American cities. And the Loral Corporation, in fact, according to the Cox Committee, did help Communist China make their missiles more reliable. A very serious thing.

Yet a few months after that, against the recommendation of his own Justice Department, and after he had received \$600,000 in campaign contributions from Bernard Schwartz, who was the President and CEO of Loral, President Clinton gave them another waiver to launch yet another satellite in Communist China.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the Clinton-Gore administration allowed 191 supercomputers between 1987 and 1998 to go to Communist China. Now, that is dangerous because they can use those supercomputers in making and designing nuclear warheads in their nuclear weapons complex. So they have an obligation, the Clinton-Gore administration had an obligation, under the law that we have, to go over and check on those computers and make sure they are not being used in the nuclear weapons complex. They have that right. Of the 191 supercomputers that were transferred to China in that 1-year period, they only checked on one supercomputer to make sure it was not being used to design nuclear weapons.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, we have this case where these hard drives were taken out of this vault, and it has now been testified to that the vault custodian, the person who is supposed to identify that very small group of people who are allowed to come in, that vault custodian would sometimes leave for 2-hour time periods. This is the Clinton-Gore security gap. We have to close it with a clean sweep.

#### CURSE OF THE CAN-DO

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITFIELD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, where I come from, in metropolitan Boston, generations of otherwise well-adjusted citizens have suffered from the ill effects of a well-known curse. It is referred to as the "Curse of the Bambino." Since the Red Sox traded Babe Ruth, life has never been quite the same, although I am one of those with deep quiet faith that the curse of the

Bambino officially expires as we enter into the new millennium.

I would note, for my colleagues and friends, folks like Mr. Freedman, and the gentleman from New York (Mr. FOSSELLA), and the gentleman from New York (Mr. SWEENEY), that if they check today's American League standings, they would find that the Yankees are in second place and the Red Sox are in first.

I rise today, however, Mr. Speaker, to discuss a different kind of curse. Call it the "Curse of the Can-Do." The curse afflicts the United States Coast Guard in its long proud tradition of never turning down a call for help, of never shirking new responsibility, even when the gas tank is literally on empty.

It is too late for the Red Sox to get Babe Ruth back, but we still have an opportunity to ensure the readiness of the Coast Guard to discharge its life-saving mission. So I take to the House floor to thank some colleagues who recently have helped lead us in that direction, but also to warn that we are still sailing into a very stiff wind.

Last month, the House took historic steps to shore up Coast Guard resources to save lives, to prevent pollution, to fight drugs, to help the economy, to respond to natural disasters, and to enhance national security. Now it is up to us to see these efforts through.

The fiscal year 2001 transportation appropriation bill, passed recently by the full House, would reverse more than a decade of chronic underfunding that has made it nearly impossible, nearly impossible, for the Coast Guard to do the work the Congress has mandated that it do. For the first time in recent memory, there is now genuine hope that we can adequately safeguard the lives and livelihoods of those who live and work on or near the water, from the small harbors of New England to the ice flows of Alaska; from the Great Lakes to the gulf coast to the banks of the Mississippi.

I particularly want to commend the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG), the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, and the ranking member, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY); as well as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportation, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO). Their leadership has underscored the stark fact that the demands on the Coast Guard have vastly outpaced its resources. There is no longer margin for error, and the consequence of any such error is literally a life and death matter.

Despite the fact that there are no more Coast Guard personnel today than there were in 1967, it is indisputable that day in and day out no public agency works harder or smarter. As

a reminder, during the 1990s, the Coast Guard reduced its workforce by nearly 10 percent and operated within a budget that rose by only 1 percent in actual dollars. Actual dollars. Not dollars adjusted for inflation, but actual dollars. Over this period, it has also responded to a half million SOS calls, an average of approximately 65,000 each year, and, in the process, has saved 50,000 lives.

Every year the Coast Guard performs 50,000 inspections of U.S. and foreign merchant vessels. It ensures the safe passage of a million commercial vessels through our ports and waterways. Every year it responds to 13,000 reports of water pollution. Every year it inspects 1,000 offshore drilling platforms. Every year it conducts 12,000 fisheries enforcement boardings. And every year it prevents 100,000 pounds of cocaine from reaching American shores and infecting the streets and neighborhoods of our communities.

Two centuries of experience have taught us to rely on the professionalism, judgment, compassion, commitment and courage of the Coast Guard. From hurricane to airplane crashes; from drug smugglers to foreign factory trawlers, the Coast Guard is always, always, on call, just as it has been for some 200 years. We have learned to trust the Coast Guard with all we hold dear: our property, our natural resources, and our lives. In Washington, a long way from the sea and the wind and the whitecaps, it has been tempting to task the Coast Guard with new and multiple and burdensome missions. Far too tempting.

As co-chair of the Congressional Coast Guard Caucus, along with my colleagues, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), I have had grave concerns for a long time. Most recently, much has been made of the demands on the Coast Guard for their work in the area of illegal drug interdiction. As a former prosecutor, I am all for fighting the drug war, and have fully supported calling upon the Coast Guard to step up its interdiction efforts, but not at the expense of its core mission, the saving of human lives.

We just cannot wish away the costs, and I am not ready to start treating search and rescue like a luxury we can do without, any more than we can move cops off the beat and then complain about street crime. We have stretched the Coast Guard so thin for so long that it can barely be expected to fulfill its credo, *Semper Paratus*, "Always Prepared." And there are scores and scores of new missions waiting in the wings.

This year, the Coast Guard was the only Federal agency to earn an A from the Independent Government Performance Project for operating with unusual efficiency and effectiveness. That assessment placed the Coast Guard at